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MUSIC, TERRITORY, AND PEACE: A LITERATURE REVIEW FROM 2000 TO 2025

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ABSTRACT

This article presents an integrative and critical review of the academic literature on the relationship between music, territory, and peace. The objective was to critically analyze academic production on the role of music in territorial peacebuilding, considering its potential and limitations, with the intention of developing an analytical framework to guide contextualized and sustainable interventions. To this end, a systematic search strategy was carried out in Semantic Scholar, La Referencia, PubMed, CrossRef, and Dimensions between January and May 2025. Search equations were designed and, after applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, twenty-four studies published between 2000 and 2025 were selected. The results reveal a consensus on the role of community music practices in reconciliation, cultural revitalization, and social cohesion in contexts of conflict and displacement. The role of music in strengthening territorial identity and collective memory is also recognized. However, the literature warns of the risks of political instrumentalization, cultural exclusion, and the reproduction of hierarchies when interventions lack contextual sensitivity. The debate highlights that music is not an intrinsically positive resource, but rather a social and political device whose impact depends on local dynamics and participatory processes. Finally, gaps are identified related to the lack of longitudinal studies, the lack of systematization in diverse rural and urban contexts, and the need to move toward comparative and interdisciplinary approaches. In summary, music can become a tool for sustainable peace if it is part of critical and culturally situated processes.

KEYWORDS: Collective memory, Community music, Peacebuilding, Reconciliation, Territorial identity, Interdisciplinarity.

1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between music, territory, and peace (Bista, 2021) as categories and their connections are of interest to the social sciences and humanities, particularly in areas affected by armed conflict, forced displacement, and reconciliation processes. In this context, several studies indicate that music, in addition to being a cultural or aesthetic expression, can also play a dynamic role in peacebuilding by facilitating processes of reconciliation, regeneration of the social fabric, and cultural revitalization in territories affected by violence (Samper et al., 2025; Littfack, 2017; Muñoz, 2018; Acevedo Espinosa, 2014; Ávila, 2020; Rojas, 2021). From this perspective, music appears as one of the vehicles for intercultural dialogue, empathy, and social inclusion, while strengthening collective memory and territorial identities (Howell et al., 2019; Howell, 2020, 2022; Hall, 2024).

The relevance of the findings of this study is evident in community experiences in Colombia, Africa, and Europe, where musical practices, as documented, have contributed to reconciliation and symbolic repair. In Colombia, for example, community music has been a key factor in the re-signification of territories affected by armed conflict, articulating Afro-descendant, indigenous, and peasant traditions with initiatives of memory and cultural resistance (Samper et al., 2024; Littfack, 2017; Rojas, 2021). Internationally, similar experiences have been documented in post-apartheid South Africa and the Balkans, suggesting that one common pattern is the use of music to overcome social fragmentation (Urbain, 2007; Howell & Korum, 2022).

However, literature also highlights limitations and ambivalences. In some cases, music has been used as an instrument of propaganda (Revill, 2000), exclusion, or reinforcement of exclusionary nationalist identities, and therefore does not in itself guarantee peacebuilding (Sandoval, 2016; Urbain, 2021; Deane, 2024; Trotta, 2018). In addition, gaps have been identified in the evaluation of long-term impacts and in the systematization of experiences in diverse rural and urban contexts, which invites critical and comparative approaches that integrate the potential and limitations of music in sustainable peace scenarios (Howell, 2022; Good et al., 2020).

In this context, the question that guided the study was: How has the role of music in territorial peacebuilding been addressed in the academic literature between 2020 and 2025, and under what conditions are its potentialities and limitations recognized, with a view to developing an analytical framework to guide contextualized and sustainable interventions? In line with this, the overall objective was to critically analyze academic literature (2020-

2025) on the role of music in territorial peacebuilding, considering its potential and limitations, with a view to developing an analytical framework to guide contextualized and sustainable interventions. The analysis is based on the premise that music, in conjunction with the territory, has the potential to transform reconciliation, memory, and community identity, if it is part of local and participatory dynamics and is not manipulated by interests of domination or exclusion.

The novelty of this study lies in its emphasis on the territorial dimension, an aspect that has been underdeveloped in previous reviews on music and peace (Sandoval, 2016; Howell, 2022). By integrating perspectives from different disciplinary fields and contrasting experiences in diverse regional contexts, the work constructs an interdisciplinary analytical framework. This framework offers, by way of approximation, tools for valuing music not only as a cultural resource, but also as a political and social device capable of contributing to sustainable peace processes without losing sight of its limitations.

2. METHOD

2.1. Study design

An integrative review with a critical scope was conducted, aimed at mapping and analyzing academic production on the relationship between music, territory, and peace. This design was chosen because of its suitability for synthesizing findings from empirical and theoretical studies, identifying knowledge gaps, and generating comparative analytical frameworks (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005).

2.2. Search strategy

The search strategy was implemented between January and May 2025 using Semantic Scholar, La Referencia, PubMed, CrossRef, and Dimensions. Thematic search equations were designed, combining Boolean operators and truncations. Examples of terms used were music AND peacebuilding, music AND conflict transformation, music AND territorial identity, community music AND reconciliation, and musical practices AND collective memory. These equations were adapted according to the specificity of each database or repository. Table 1 summarizes the criteria and filters applied in this study.

Table 1. Search equations in the study.

Database	Field	Search equation	Filters
PubMed	Title/ Abstract	(music [tiab] AND peacebuilding [tiab]) OR (community music [tiab] AND reconciliation [tiab])	2000- 2025, EN/SP/ PT

CrossRef	Title/ Abstract	(music AND territorial identity) OR (musical practices AND collective memory)	2000-2025
Semantic Scholar	All fields	(music AND conflict AND transformation)	2000-2025
La Referencia	Title/ Abstract	(música AND paz) OR (música comunitaria AND reconciliación)	2000-2025, ES/PT
Dimensions	All fields	(music AND peacebuilding) OR (music AND territory)	2000-2025

Note. Summary of the search equations for the selected resources.

2.3. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Explicit criteria were established to ensure the relevance and quality of the studies:

- Inclusion: (i) peer-reviewed publications (university theses, articles, and book chapters), (ii) research addressing the relationship between music and peace processes, reconciliation, territorial identity, or collective memory, (iii) studies published between 2000 and 2025, and (iv) availability in English, Spanish, or Portuguese.
- Exclusion: (i) non-refereed gray literature (reports, non-peer-reviewed documents), (ii)

articles focused exclusively on clinical music therapy without a territorial or peace link, (iii) studies whose thematic coverage was tangential to music and peace, and (iv) doctoral theses or academic papers not published in institutional repositories with formal refereeing.

2.4. Screening and selection process

The initial search yielded 941 records. After removing duplicates (n = 430), 511 unique documents were retained. Screening by title and abstract was performed, reducing the sample to 242 eligible articles. Subsequently, the full texts were reviewed, and the inclusion criteria were applied, selecting the 24 most relevant studies. This procedure was documented using a flow chart adapted from the PRISMA 2020 protocol (Page et al., 2021), as shown in Figure 1.

The initial search yielded 941 records distributed as follows: Semantic Scholar (430), La Referencia (80), PubMed (65), CrossRef (190), and Dimensions (176).

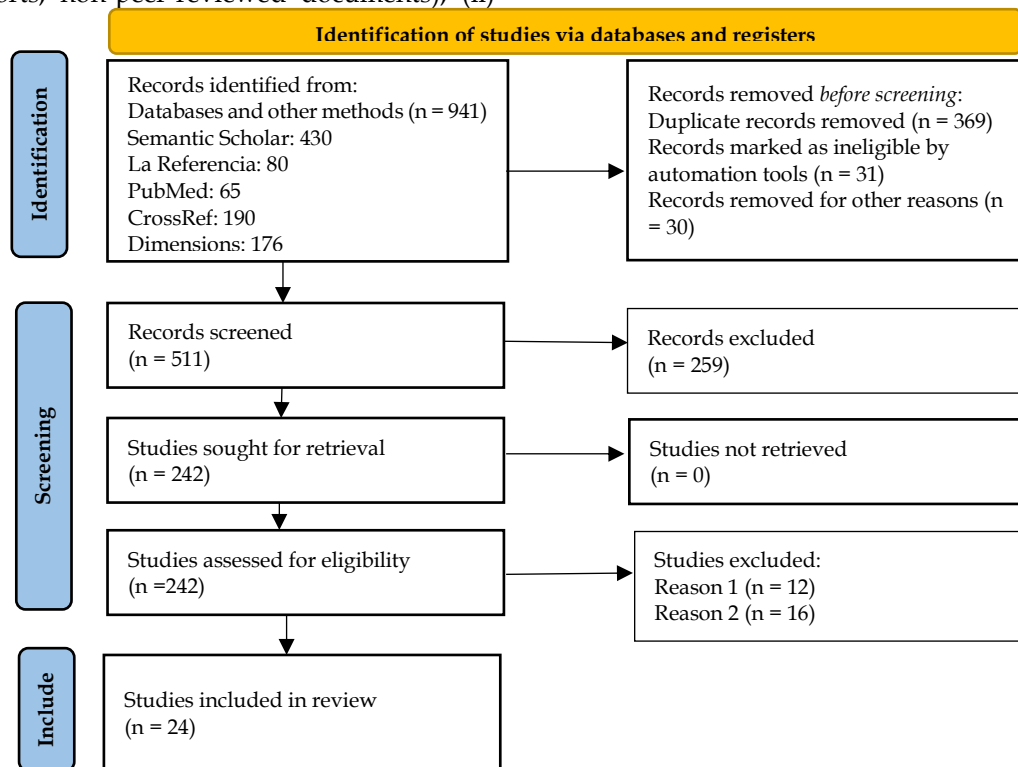


Figure 1. Article selection process (adapted from PRISMA 2020).

Note. PRISMA flow diagram illustrating the process of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion of studies in the systematic review.

2.5. Data extraction and analysis

Metadata (year, country, discipline, methodology, population studied) and key findings related to music in contexts of peace and conflict were extracted from

each article. A deductive-inductive thematic analysis framework was used (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the deductive phase, four categories derived from the literature were applied: (i) community music practices and territorial peacebuilding; (ii) music, territorial

identity, and collective memory; (iii) limitations, criticisms, and adverse effects; and (iv) interdisciplinary approaches and theoretical frameworks. In the inductive phase, emerging sub-themes were identified (e.g., ritualization, *communitas*, sound interculturality).

The following fields were systematically extracted from each article: author and year of publication, country/region of study, discipline, methodological design, participating population, publication source, and main findings. This information was organized in an extraction matrix (Table 3), which allowed for standardizing the comparison between studies and ensuring the traceability of the synthesis.

The findings were analyzed using a deductive-inductive thematic analysis procedure, following the six phases proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006): (i) familiarization with the data, (ii) generation of initial codes, (iii) search for themes, (iv) review of themes, (v) definition and naming of themes, and (vi) preparation of the final report. In the deductive phase, four initial categories derived from the literature were applied (community musical practices; music, territorial identity, and collective memory; limitations and adverse effects; interdisciplinary approaches and theoretical frameworks), while in the inductive phase, emerging sub-themes were identified (e.g., ritualization, *communitas*, sound interculturality).

To assess inter-coder reliability, a random sample of 20% of the studies (5 out of 24) was coded independently by two researchers. The level of agreement achieved was 86%, which represents a prominent level of agreement in qualitative analysis. Discrepancies were resolved through peer discussion, and in specific cases a third researcher was consulted to determine the final classification.

The analysis was supported by NVivo 14 software, which allowed for the organization of units of meaning, the construction of coding matrices, and the generation of thematic reports. A codebook (Table 2) was also developed with the main

categories, operational definitions, textual examples, and emerging subcodes, which reinforces the transparency and reproducibility of the analytical process.

Finally, to ensure methodological rigor, a critical assessment of the quality and risk of bias of the included studies was carried out, applying the CASP (for qualitative studies), JBI (for reviews), and MMAT (for mixed studies) tools. Each study received an overall rating (High, Medium, or Low), summarized in a rating table (Table 5). These ratings were considered in the final synthesis, so that statements classified as Strong are supported by high-quality studies replicated in different contexts, while the Moderate or Weak categories reflect methodological limitations or less consistent evidence.

2.6. Rigor and validity

To ensure the reliability and validity of the process, several complementary strategies were implemented. First, independent double coding was performed on a random sample of 20% of the included articles (5 out of 24), achieving an 86% agreement rate, which is considered high agreement in qualitative studies. Discrepancies were resolved through peer discussion until consensus was reached, and in the few cases where divergence persisted, a third researcher was consulted. Second, a systematic record was kept in extraction matrices that documented inclusion, exclusion, and categorization decisions, ensuring methodological traceability.

Finally, the analysis was conducted using NVivo 14 software, which helped the organization of units of meaning, the construction of coding matrices, and the export of thematic reports. A codebook (Table 2) was also developed with the main categories, their operational definitions, textual examples, and emerging subcodes, reinforcing the transparency and reproducibility of the analytical process.

Table 2. Example of codebook of categories and subcodes

Main category	Operational definition	General idea of the coded article	Emerging subcodes
Community musical practices and territorial peacebuilding	Collective experiences of music creation, performance, or teaching linked to processes of reconciliation, cultural revitalization, and social cohesion in conflict contexts.	In Montes de María, music has helped meets between victims and ex-combatants, as well as the rearticulation of community life (Rojas & Cortez, 2025).	Ritualization, <i>communitas</i> , community festivals
Music, territorial identity, and collective memory	Use of music as a resource to reconstruct historical memories, affirm local identities, and strengthen territorial bonds in displaced or marginalized communities.	Traditional music festivals, such as the Petronio Álvarez Festival, promote the recognition of Afro-descendant heritages and generate social impacts in host territories (Aguado et al., 2024).	Living memory, displacement, sonic interculturality
Limitations, critiques, and adverse effects	Situations in which music is instrumentalized for political propaganda, cultural exclusion, or reproduction of hierarchies, generating negative or ambivalent effects.	Musical peacebuilding initiatives can generate ambiguous effects when the dynamics of the enemy or the other is not considered (Hirschmann & Van Doesum, 2021).	Political propaganda, Eurocentrism, exclusion

Interdisciplinary approaches and theoretical frameworks	Academic perspectives that articulate anthropology, critical musicology, cultural geography, and peace studies to analyze the role of music in peacebuilding.	The convergence of anthropology, cultural geography, community psychology, and peace studies has enabled the development of complex theoretical frameworks (Howell, 2020; Urbain, 2007).	Typologies of musical peace, harmonious relations, interdisciplinarity
<i>Note. This table is presented as an example of how categories and subcodes are organized.</i>			

3. RESULTS

To provide an overview of the literature reviewed, Table 3 presents the 24 selected studies. The organization by country/region, methodology, and main findings highlights both the variety of

disciplinary approaches and the concentration of contributions in certain contexts (particularly Colombia). This systematization is an important input for identifying common patterns and research gaps regarding the relationship between music, territory, and peace.

Table 3. Summary of the 24 Studies Included in the Review

#	Country/Region	Methodology / Type of Study	Journal / Institution	Key Findings	Citations
1	Colombia, Argentina	Systematization of experiences, qualitative analysis	<i>International Journal of Community Music</i>	Community music, reconciliation, cultural revitalization, sustainability	(Samper et al., 2024)
2	Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Northern Ireland	Comparative case study, qualitative analysis	<i>International Journal of Community Music</i>	Community music in divided cities, urban peacebuilding	(Howell et al., 2019)
3	Ethiopia, South Sudan	Ethnographic analysis, case study	<i>Ethnomusicology</i>	Music as a promoter of peace and conflict, applied ethnomusicology	(Bishop, 2024)
4	Global	Theoretical review, empirical examples	<i>Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research</i>	Music as a tool for peace, risks of misuse	(Wu, 2019)
5	Italy (historical)	Historical-diplomatic analysis	<i>Acta Musicologica</i>	Music in diplomatic negotiations, Peace of Asti (1615)	(Mailes, 2024)
6	Brazil	Genre analysis, case study	<i>Anthropologica</i>	Music, territorial identity, prejudice, and symbolic conflicts	(Trotta, 2018)
7	China	Philosophical analysis, textual review	<i>Religions</i>	Music and peace in Confucianism, educational and political model	(Pat-Shamir, 2022)
8	Kenya	Musical composition, educational intervention	<i>International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences</i>	Song for peace, impact on youth and schools	(Kihoro, 2018)
9	Australia	Analysis of musical projects, historical review	-	Music and healing of Indigenous historical wounds	(Elizabeth, 2017)
10	Colombia	Conceptual analysis, review of peace negotiations	<i>Geopolitics</i>	Emergence of the concept of "territorial peace" in Colombia	(Cairo et al., 2018)
11	Colombia	Participatory research with children, case study	<i>Early Childhood Education Journal</i>	Young children as agents of territorial transformation for peace	(Escorcía et al., 2025)
12	Global	Critical review, theoretical analysis	<i>Third World Quarterly</i>	Critique of localism in peacebuilding	(Mac Ginty, 2015)
13	Colombia	Critical analysis, case study	<i>Geoforum</i>	Lessons on pacification and dialogue in Colombian territorial peace	(Díaz et al., 2021)
14	Colombia	Geopolitical analysis, conceptual review	<i>Geopolitics</i>	From "territorial peace" to "total peace" in Colombia	(Cairo et al., 2024)
15	Global	Quantitative analysis, review of border conflicts	<i>International Studies Quarterly</i>	Democracy, territorial issues, and conflict	(Gibler, 2007)
16	Philippines	Spatial analysis, study of peace zones	<i>Cooperation and Conflict</i>	Spatialities of peace zones	(Macaspac, 2023)
17	Colombia	Land governance analysis, case study	<i>International Journal of Urban Sustainable Development</i>	Land governance and sustainable peacebuilding	(Vanelli et al., 2022)
18	Colombia	Comparative analysis, review of peace variations	<i>Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding</i>	Variations of peace in Colombia	(Kurtenbach, 2024)
19	Philippines	Intergroup political theater, intervention study	<i>Political Psychology</i>	Transformation of social representations in peace leaders	(Montiel et al., 2024)
20	Colombia (Amazon)	Case study, analysis of biodiversity and violence	<i>Geoforum</i>	Violence and agrobiodiversity in the Colombian Amazon	(Van Dexter et al., 2021)
21	Global	Theoretical analysis, integration of arguments	<i>Conflict Management and Peace Science</i>	Integration of arguments on democratic and territorial peace	(Owsiak, 2019)

22	Colombia	Critical analysis, study of political participation	<i>Antipode</i>	Participation policies in neoliberal peace in Colombia	(Vélez-Torres et al., 2021)
23	Global	Quantitative analysis, democratic transition and borders	<i>American Journal of Political Science</i>	Democratic transitions following peaceful territorial transfers	(Gibler et al., 2010)
24	Colombia	State of the art, conceptual and bibliographic review	<i>IAD - Action-Oriented Research and Decision-Making</i>	Colombian scientific production on peace-territory and peace-development	(Arroyo Caicedo et al., 2016)
Note. This table provides a synthesis of the findings from the sources included in the study.					

3.1. Community music practices and territorial peacebuilding

The studies analyzed converge in pointing out that community music practices have played a significant role in processes of reconciliation, cultural revitalization, and regeneration of social fabric in contexts of conflict. In the case of Colombia, multiple documented experiences in Montes de María, the Pacific region, and Bogotá show that music has facilitated encounters between victims and ex-combatants, as well as the rearticulation of community life in rural and urban areas (Rojas and Cortez, 2025; Littfack, 2017; Muñoz, 2018).

Along the same lines, the Sonidos para la Construcción de Paz (Sounds for Peacebuilding) initiative has set a precedent in the use of music as a tool for reconciliation and social transformation. Beyond being a government program, it has established itself as a space where children, adolescents, and young people find in art an alternative to the imagery of violence that has historically permeated their territories. According to the 2024 management report, the initiative reached 1,155,000 people in musical and artistic activities, developed 885 events, benefited 358,500 participants in training processes, and reached 687 municipalities and 1,808 educational institutions in the country's 32 departments. The emphasis was placed on the Territorially Focused Development Programs (PDET) and the Areas Most Affected by Armed Conflict (ZOMAC), regions heavily affected by the war (Ministry of Culture, Arts, and Knowledge, 2024). With an investment of 360 billion pesos and the participation of 3,417 artist-educators and experts, mostly from local communities, the program demonstrates that music not only educates and trains, but also heals and rebuilds the social fabric, reaffirming its role as a common language that promotes dialogue and peace.

Factors such as musical ritualization, the emergence of *communitas* experiences, and sound interculturality have been identified as key mechanisms in the creation of spaces for trust and dialogue. Similar results are reported in Africa,

where musical traditions have functioned as vehicles for symbolic post-apartheid healing in South Africa, and in Europe, particularly in the Balkans, where community choral practices have been used to rebuild social bridges after the war (Urbain, 2007; Howell & Korum, 2022).

3.2. Music, territorial identity, and collective memory

The second line of findings points to the close relationship between music, territorial identity, and collective memory. The literature shows that music allows displaced or marginalized communities to reaffirm their cultural roots and rebuild bonds of belonging (Rojas, 2021; Acevedo Espinosa, 2014; Trotta, 2018). Paradigmatic examples are traditional music festivals, such as the Petronio Álvarez Festival in Cali, which not only promote the recognition of Afro-descendant heritage but also generate economic and social impacts in the host territories (Aguado et al., 2024; Rojas & Cortez, 2024). In this context, music acts as a device for living memory, articulating collective narratives in the face of violence and reinforcing local and transnational identities.

3.3. Limitations, criticisms, and adverse effects

While the above findings highlight the transformative nature of music, a significant part of the literature emphasizes its limitations and ambivalences. Several authors document how, in certain contexts, music has been instrumentalized as a tool for political propaganda, the reproduction of prejudices, or even cultural exclusion (Sandoval, 2016; Urbain, 2021; Deane, 2024; Trotta, 2018). Likewise, it is noted that poorly designed musical interventions can reinforce colonial hierarchies or impose Eurocentric models that are alien to local dynamics (Samper et al., 2025; Deane, 2024). Similarly, Hirschmann and Van Doesum (2021) found that musical peacebuilding initiatives can have ambiguous effects when the dynamics of the enemy or the other is not considered, highlighting the need for critical and contextual implementation. These limitations highlight the need to adopt critical, context-sensitive, and participatory approaches that

recognize both the risks and the potential of musical practices in peace processes.

3.4. *Interdisciplinary approaches and theoretical frameworks*

Finally, the literature reveals a strong trend toward interdisciplinarity in the analysis of music, territory, and peace. The convergence of anthropology, cultural geography, community psychology, and peace studies has allowed for the development of complex theoretical frameworks that are sensitive to the diversity of contexts (Howell, 2020; Howell, 2022; Good et al., 2020). Among the most notable proposals are the typologies of musical peace (Howell, 2022), which identify different ways in which music can contribute to peace, and the framework of harmonious relations proposed by Urbain (2007), which emphasizes music as a space for intercultural encounters and negotiation. These theoretical contributions confirm that music is an ambivalent and polysemic phenomenon, whose effectiveness in peacebuilding (Schneider, 2023) depends both on its performative uses and on the social and territorial conditions in which it is embedded.

3.5. *Key studies*

Table 4 summarizes some of the representative studies included in the review, selected for the diversity of their methodological approaches, contexts, and contributions. In Colombia, works such as those by Rojas and Cortez (2024), Littfack (2017), Rojas (2021), and Muñoz (2018) offer solid empirical evidence on the role of community music in reconciliation, cultural revitalization, and the reconstruction of historical memory, with an emphasis on indigenous populations, Afro-descendants, and communities affected by armed conflict. For his part, Howell (2022) provides a comprehensive theoretical review that systematizes six types of musical peace, offering a useful conceptual framework for comparing experiences in different regions.

Taken together, these studies show both the richness of methodological approaches, ranging from the systematization of experiences to ethnography and theoretical review, and the convergence on a central finding: music promotes processes of reconciliation and social cohesion in contexts of violence and displacement, while contributing to the construction of territorial identity and collective memory.

Table 4. Example of comparison of key studies on music, territory, and peace

Article	Methodology	Context/Location	Key Findings	Population
(Rojas & Cortez, 2024)	Systematization of experiences, qualitative analysis	Colombia (various regions)	Community music promotes reconciliation, cultural revitalization, and territorial sustainability	Indigenous leaders, Afro-Colombians, community musicians
(Littfack, 2017)	Journalistic chronicles, case study	Montes de María and Bogotá, Colombia	Music helps reconciliation and the reconstruction of historical memory	Communities affected by armed conflict
(Howell, 2022)	Theoretical review, conceptual typology	Global	Six varieties of peace that music can foster are found	Diverse musical practices
(Rojas, 2021)	Ethnographic analysis	Bogotá, Colombia	Music in religious festivities strengthens identity and social cohesion among Afro-Colombian migrants	Afro-Colombian migrants and displaced persons
(Muñoz, 2018)	Qualitative research	Colombia	Music contributes to reconciliation, empowerment, and identity in post-conflict communities	Communities affected by conflict
Note. This table provides a comparative synthesis of selected studies highlighting the role of music in reconciliation, identity, and territorial peacebuilding across different contexts and populations.				

3.6. *Main assertions and evidence*

Table 5 summarizes the central assertions found in the reviewed literature and the level of strength of the evidence supporting them. First, there is strong consensus regarding the capacity of community music to facilitate reconciliation processes and regenerate the social fabric in territories affected by conflict, supported by both case studies and theoretical reviews in multiple contexts (Samper et al., 2024; Littfack, 2017; Howell, 2022).

Similarly, there is concrete evidence regarding the role of music in strengthening territorial identity and collective memory, particularly in displaced or marginalized communities, where ethnographic studies and festival analyses show positive impacts on social cohesion and cultural belonging (Rojas, 2021; Acevedo Espinosa, 2014; Aguado et al., 2024).

However, the table also reveals areas of ambivalence and gaps. Although music can act as a resource for peace, several studies warn of the risks of its instrumentalization, exclusion, or

reinforcement of social divisions when interventions are not context-sensitive (Sandoval, 2016; Urbain, 2021; Deane, 2024). The evidence in these cases is moderate, suggesting the need for critical approaches and longitudinal studies to assess sustainable impacts over time. Finally, statements with weak evidence are found, particularly criticisms of Eurocentric approaches to the application of music to peace processes. While these are relevant caveats, further comparative research is still needed to combine analytical frameworks that recognize cultural and territorial specificities.

The grading of the evidence presented in Table 5 was based on a quality matrix developed from the 24 studies included. Critical appraisal tools adapted to the design of each study were applied (CASP for

qualitative studies, JBI for reviews, MMAT for mixed studies). Each article received an overall score (low, medium, or high), considering clarity of goals, methodological adequacy, validity of analysis, and relevance of findings. Based on this, it was established that a statement is classified as Strong when it was supported by at least two high-quality studies in different contexts; as Moderate when the evidence came from medium-quality studies or was limited to a single context; and as Weak when it was supported by few studies or studies with significant methodological limitations. This procedure reinforces the transparency and consistency of the analysis, preventing the grading of evidence from being based solely on subjective criteria.

Table 5. Main claims and level of evidence in studies on music, territory, and peace

Main Claim	Evidence strength	Reasoning	Papers
Community music can ease reconciliation and regenerate the social fabric in territories affected by conflict	Strong (9/10)	Consistent evidence from case studies and theoretical reviews across multiple contexts	(Samper et al., 2024; Littfack, 2017; Muñoz, 2018; Acevedo Espinosa, 2014; Howell, 2022; Rojas, 2021; Ávila, 2020; Samper & Salcedo, 2024)
Music strengthens territorial identity and collective memory in displaced or marginalized communities	Strong (8/10)	Ethnographic studies and festival analyses show positive impacts on cohesion and identity	(Rojas, 2021; Samper & Salcedo, 2024; Acevedo Espinosa, 2014; Aguado et al., 2024; Trotta, 2018; Reed, 2019)
The use of music in peace processes can have adverse effects if not adapted to the local context	Moderate (7/10)	Critical reviews and case studies warn about instrumentalization and exclusion	(Sandoval, 2016; Urbain, 2021; Deane, 2024; Trotta, 2018; Samper et al., 2024)
Music can be used both to promote peace and to reinforce divisions and prejudices	Moderate (6/10)	Historical and contemporary examples show ambivalent uses of music	(Sandoval, 2016; Urbain, 2021; Deane, 2024; Trotta, 2018)
Evidence on the long-term impact of music on territorial peace is limited	Moderate (4/10)	Lack of longitudinal studies and systematic measurements of sustainable outcomes	(Sandoval, 2016; Deane, 2024; Urbain, 2021)
Eurocentric approaches may limit the effectiveness of music in territorial peacebuilding	Weak (3/10)	Theoretical critiques and local experiences highlight the importance of contextualization	(Samper et al., 2024; Sandoval, 2016; Deane, 2024)
Note. This table synthesizes the main claims found in literature, the assessed level of evidence supporting each claim, and the reasoning derived from theoretical, empirical, and critical studies on music, territory, and peace.			

3.7. Found gaps.

Table 6 presents the research gaps found in the literature on music, territory, and peace, distributed across five analytical attributes: reconciliation and memory, territorial identity, social inclusion, limitations/criticisms, and interdisciplinary approaches. As can be seen, most of the output is concentrated in rural and urban case studies, with seven and six entries respectively on topics such as reconciliation and memory or territorial identity. This reflects a tendency to privilege the analysis of concrete and situated experiences, with great descriptive richness and contextual value, but with limitations in constructing generalizations or comparative models of greater scope.

In contrast, the fields of long-term impact

assessment and critical analysis show a lower density of research. Only two studies were found that measured sustainability in reconciliation and memory, and one in territorial identity and social inclusion. In the case of limitations and critiques, there is even an explicit gap around long-term impacts, confirming the need to design longitudinal studies that allow for the assessment of the real effectiveness and permanence of musical practices in peace processes. In contrast, critical analysis is better represented in limitations and criticisms (five records), suggesting an incipient interest in problematizing the uses of music, although still insufficient in relation to other attributes.

Finally, the interdisciplinary approaches column shows relevant but still scattered contributions. Literature combines elements of anthropology,

critical musicology, community psychology, and peace studies, but with a small number of studies per topic (between two and four), which limits the consolidation of robust frameworks. Overall, the table shows a field that is expanding but fragmented, with strengths in the documentation of local

experiences and clear weaknesses in the measurement of sustainable impacts and systematic interdisciplinary articulation. These gaps shape a future research agenda focused on longitudinal studies, comparative analyses, and more integrative approaches.

Table 6. Matrix of Research Gaps on Music, Territory, and Peace

Themes / Attributes	Rural case studies	Urban case studies	Long-Term impact evaluation	Critical analysis	Interdisciplinary approaches
Reconciliation and Memory	7	5	2	3	4
Territorial Identity	4	6	1	2	3
Social Inclusion	3	4	1	2	2
Limitations and Critiques	1	2	GAP	5	2

Note. This table summarizes the identified research gaps about music, territory, and peace. Numbers represent the frequency of studies found in each category, while the label "GAP" highlights areas with insufficient or absent research, particularly in long-term impact assessments.

As a complement, the heatmap (Figure 2) shows a concentration of literature on rural and urban case studies, especially on the topics of reconciliation/memory (7 and 5 studies, respectively) and territorial identity (4 and 6). This pattern confirms that the field has prioritized the documentation of specific experiences, with a strong emphasis on Colombian and Latin American contexts, but with less capacity for generalization.

In contrast, the lighter shades in the columns for long-term impact and interdisciplinary approaches show areas of critical gaps: only between 0 and 2 studies per attribute report longitudinal measurements or systematic interdisciplinary integrations. This reinforces the idea that, although the literature is rich in descriptions, it still lacks sustainable evaluations and robust theoretical articulation between disciplines.

Finally, the critical analysis column appears as an intermediate dimension: although there are a relatively high number of works in Limitations & Critiques (5), other attributes show only 2 or 3, suggesting that the field is still in transition toward more reflective and critical approaches to music in peace processes.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this review show that music occupies a central place in territorial peacebuilding processes, but always with an ambivalent charge. From a critical musicology perspective, it cannot be conceived solely as an aesthetic artifact, but rather as a social and political device that influences the dispute and production of identities, memories, and cultural narratives (O'Connell & Castelo-Branco, 2010).

Experiences documented in different regions, such as Colombia and Africa, show that community musical practices have the capacity to strengthen social cohesion and, at the same time, open spaces for symbolic negotiation in which the sense of territorial belonging is redefined (Qu et al., 2023). Music, therefore, operates on two levels: as a resource for integration and as a field of dispute.

From the perspective of peace studies, it is key to recover the notion of positive peace (Galtung, 1996). This approach goes beyond the absence of direct violence and raises the need to transform unjust social structures to give rise to more equitable relationships. In this framework, music can become a resource that promotes reconciliation, regenerates the social fabric, and favors forms of coexistence based on trust and solidarity.

However, the results also warn that when musical practices are instrumentalized for propaganda purposes or implemented in a decontextualized manner, they tend to reproduce social exclusions and divisions (Sandoval, 2016; Trotta, 2018). Even in scenarios explicitly designed for reconciliation, ambiguous effects have been identified, as music can reactivate tensions with the adversary and hinder trust-building (Hirschmann & Van Doesum, 2021).

An interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary perspective allows us to complicate this picture.

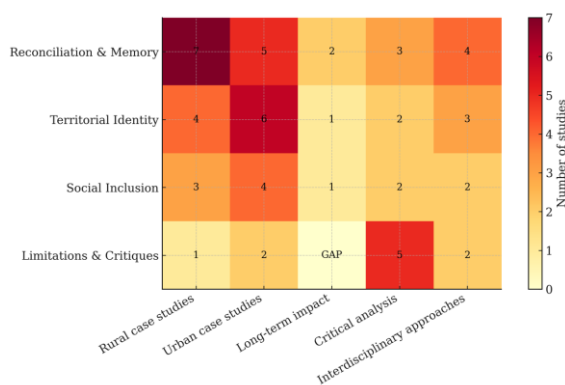


Figure 2. Heatmap: music, territory, and peace
Source. Author's elaboration based on the reviewed literature.

Howell (2020, 2022) provides typologies that distinguish different forms of peace generated by music, while Urbain (2007) suggests the concept of “harmonious relations” to explain its potential as a space for intercultural encounter. In turn, Schneider (2023) extends the analysis to the field of cultural diplomacy and citizenship, showing that music not only has an impact on the community, but also on policies and scenarios with international projection.

Taken together, these contributions show that music is a polysemic and ambivalent phenomenon: it can generate performative spaces for dialogue and trust, but it can also become a resource susceptible to hegemonic appropriation. Recognizing this tension is essential for designing critical, participatory, and sustainable musical interventions capable of enhancing its transformative effects while addressing its structural limitations.

5. CONCLUSION

This study began with the question: how, and under what contextual conditions, can music contribute to territorial peacebuilding without reproducing exclusions or risks of instrumentalization? The review allows us to affirm that music, when developed in dialogue with local dynamics and through participatory processes, becomes a significant resource for reconciliation, collective memory, and territorial identity. However, its potential is not intrinsic, but rather dependent on the social, political, and cultural conditions that frame musical practices.

In practical terms, the findings suggest that community organizations, cultural institutions, and public policy actors should design music programs that aim to:

- Promote the participation of local communities.
- Strengthen collective memories and intergenerational bonds.
- Avoid standardized or Eurocentric approaches that may reproduce exclusions.

At the academic level, priority gaps for future

research are identified:

- Develop longitudinal studies to assess the sustainable impacts of musical practices on peace processes.
- Promote comparative methodologies that analyze similarities and differences between rural and urban contexts, as well as between regions of the world.
- Move towards a more robust interdisciplinary integration that articulates critical musicology, anthropology, peace studies, and community psychology.

In this way, the article not only systematizes the existing literature, but also provides guidance for community action and opens a research agenda that recognizes both the transformative potential and the limits of music in territorial peace building.

The original contribution of this review lies in its critical integration of the territorial dimension into the analysis of music and peace, an aspect that has been scarcely developed in previous reviews. By systematizing 24 studies published between 2000 and 2025, it offers a comparative framework that allows music to be understood not only as a cultural practice, but also as a social and political device with ambivalent effects on peacebuilding. This approach brings to the field an interdisciplinary and situated reading that broadens the research agenda beyond universalist or purely aesthetic approaches.

Based on these findings, actionable recommendations are proposed for different actors: (i) Academia: strengthen longitudinal and comparative research that evaluates the sustainable impacts of musical practices in diverse contexts; (ii) Public policy: design cultural programs that recognize territorial diversity and avoid the instrumentalization of music for propaganda purposes; and (iii) Community organizations: promote participatory processes that articulate collective memory, territorial identity, and intercultural dialogue, ensuring that music is a tool for cohesion and not exclusion.

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